

4959
A
SERMON

Preach'd before the

SOCIETY

FOR THE

*Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts,*

At the Parish-Church of

St. Mary-le-Bow,

On Friday, February 18. 170⁸/₉.

K By the Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM Lord Bishop of CHESTER.



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Acts xxii. Ver. 21.

Depart: For I will send thee far hence, unto the Gentiles.

TH E S E were the Words of our Blessed Lord to St. Paul, in a *Vision at Jerusalem (a)*: Commanding him to enter upon that great Work, for which he had principally made choice of him, viz. (b) *to bear his Name before the Gentiles*. And not only before the Gentiles, who were nearest to *Jerusalem*, the Place where the Christian Religion was first planted: But before the Gentiles, far off, at the remotest Distance from *Jerusalem*, nay even at the (c) *uttermost Parts of the Earth*; to which our Blessed Lord had foretold, just before his *Ascension*, his Religion should be propagated, and to which, it is highly probable, St. Paul himself afterwards carry'd it.

In the Words are Two Things very well worthy our Observation.

First, Our Blessed Lord's great Concern for the Gentile World, and his Care to have his Religion propagated through all, even the most distant Parts of it. (d) *I must send far hence unto the Gentiles*.

Secondly, The Mean which he used, in Order to have his Religion thus propagated among the Gentiles, viz. sending to them St. Paul an *Apostle, Preacher, Teacher of them, in Faith and Verity*. *I must send thee unto the Gentiles*.

And from these Two Things, observable in my Text, I must beg leave to form the Design of my following Discourse; taking Occasion from them, I think I naturally may, to represent to you,

(a) Ver. 17, 18. (b) Acts 9. 15. (c) Acts 1. 8. (d) 1 Tim. 2. 7.

First, The Obligations, which all Christians lie under, to do their utmost towards propagating the Christian Religion, in the Gentile World, even in the remotest Parts of it; as well, by planting it, where it has not yet been planted; as by cultivating and improving it, where it has.

Secondly, The proper Ways and Means, in which all Christians, in their respective Ranks and Stations, may be serviceable to this great End.

First, The Obligations, which all Christians lie under, to do their utmost, towards propagating the Christian Religion in the *Gentile* World, even in the remotest Parts of it: As well by planting it, where it has not yet been planted; as by cultivating and improving it, where it has. Now these Obligations are both so plain, and so many, that, as there will be no need, so neither will there be any Time, to do more, than almost barely to mention them. And,

First, We are obliged to this, out of a general Regard to the Honour of God, our Blessed Saviour, and his holy Religion.

Secondly, We are more especially oblig'd to this, in Compliance with the great End and Design of our Lord's coming into the World: In Imitation of his Example; in Conformity to our own Professions and Practices; and in Obedience to the Commands of God.

Thirdly, We are oblig'd to this, by all the strictest Bonds of Love and Charity to Mankind; And,

Lastly, We are oblig'd to it, in regard to our own Spiritual, and Everlasting Interests.

First, We are oblig'd to this, out of a general Regard to the Honour of God, our Blessed Saviour, and his holy Religion; which all Christians are bound to advance, to the utmost of their Power, and which can no Way so effectually be advanc'd, as by the propagating the Christian Religion. For,

First, As to God ; how can we possibly, any Way, so much advance his Honour, as by making the Gospel of his Son (the most perfect and infinitely most Glorious Manifestation of Himself, that ever He made to Mankind) known and believ'd, all over the World ? Is not this the surest, nay, is not this the only Way to possess Men's Minds with right and just Notions and Apprehensions of God : Of his infinite Goodness and loving Kindness to them, of his divine Nature and Attributes, of his Will and Way of Worship, and, in one word, of every Thing necessary to be believ'd or done, in order to render themselves most acceptable in his Sight ? And consequently is not this the only Way, to have God admir'd, esteem'd, belov'd, reverenc'd, fear'd, worshipp'd and obey'd, by all his rational Creatures, upon the whole Face of the Earth, as He ought to be ? Nay, is not this the very Way, by which God himself design'd to (e) *make his Name great among the Gentiles, from the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, and in every Place to have Incense offer'd unto his Name, and a pure Offering.*

Next, As to our Blessed Saviour : Is it not from the Gospel alone, that a clear and full Account is to be had of *the Honour due unto his Name* ? Of the Divinity of his Person ; of the supereminent Dignity of his Offices : Of the infinite Value of all that he did and suffer'd for us, and God's Acceptance of it, to the full Effect of our Redemption and Salvation : Of the Reasonableness, Wisdom and Perfection of his Doctrine : Of his being appointed, by God, sole Mediator, Lord and Judge of the World, having (f) *all Power in Heaven and in Earth given to him*, being (g) *able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him*, and being to be (h) *honoured by all Men, even*

(e) Mal. 1. 11. (f) Mat. 28. 18. (g) Heb. 7. 25. (h) John 5. 23.

as they honour God the Father himself? And will not our Saviour's Honour then naturally spread and grow, in Proportion to the spreading and growth of the Gospel? Will not the propagating of this be the surest Way, to (i) *make his Praise to be glorious*; and to have (k) *Kings see and arise, Princes also to Worship, and all People, Nations and Languages, to serve him.*

And then, As to our holy Religion: When doth that ever appear so glorious, as when it is enlarging its Borders, and extending its Conquests over the World? As when it is beating down Ignorance, Superstition, Error, Profaneness and Irreligion? As when it is triumphing over the Prejudices, Lusts, Passions, and Vices of Mankind, and setting up its rational and holy Empire upon the Ruins of them? And what is the ready Way for it to do all this, but to make the (l) *Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shine into all the dark Corners of the Earth? Shine into the very Hearts of all those, who sit in Darkness and the Shadow of Death, and so effectually convince them of its Wisdom, Power and Excellency, that it may (m) turn them from Darkness unto Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; and so at Length. (n) all the Kingdoms of this World may become the Kingdoms of Christ, and he may reign for Ever and Ever.*

Secondly, We are more especially oblig'd to this, in Compliance with the great End and Design of our Lord's coming into the World; in Imitation of his Example; in Conformity to our own Professions and Practices; and in Obedience to the Commands of God.

We all know that the great End and Design of our Lord's coming into the World was, that (o) *the World through him might be saved, that (p) all Men, Gentiles as well as Jews, might come unto the Knowledge*

(i) Isa. 49. 7. (k) Dan. 7. 14. (l) 2 Cor. 4. 4. 6. (m) Acts 26. 18. (n) Rev. 11. 15. (o) John 3. 17. (p) 1 Tim. 2. 9.

of the Truth, and so (q) not any perish, but all repent and believe, and (r) have Everlasting Life. And can we possibly know this, and yet not do all, that is in our Power, towards the Accomplishment of it? Can we, with any Face, call our selves Disciples and Servants of the Blessed Jesus, and yet not do our utmost, towards carrying on and perfecting this his main End and Design?

Especially considering, that herein he has set us a most illustrious Example, that so we should follow his Steps. For though, during his Stay upon Earth, he did not openly declare his gracious Design of offering his Salvation to the Gentile World, for fear of offending and prejudicing the Jews against Him and his Doctrine, before it was absolutely necessary: Yet, even in that Time, he did, in (s) Parables, and more reserv'd Speeches, not obscurely hint at it. And just before his Ascension into Heaven, he gave his Apostles such a very large Commission, to (t) preach his Gospel, to all Nations, and to every Creature, as might very well have been construed to extend to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. But finding, after his Ascension, that his Apostles did not so understand it, he farther explains himself, from Heaven, in Favour of the Gentiles, by a Vision to St. Peter (a). Nay, and that nothing might be wanting on his Part, he, in a very Miraculous Manner, converts St. Paul (b), and makes him the Apostle of the Gentiles, sets him apart, chiefly for this very Purpose, to bear his Name, to preach his Gospel, before them: And all along afterwards was mighty, in this Apostle, as he himself tells us, towards these Gentiles (c), did most powerfully and miraculously assist him, in his Endeavours to convert them.

Farther, Do not we our selves constantly profess, that we earnestly desire the Conversion and Salvation

(q) Rom. 9. 34. 12. 32. (r) 2 Pet. 3. 9. (s) Mat. 8. 11. 21. 41. Luke 13. 29. (t) Mat. 28. 19. Mark 16. 15. (a) Acts 10. (b) Acts 9. (c) Gal. 2. 8.

of the *Gentiles*, and both in publick and private, put up our *Prayers* to God accordingly? And how extremely *absurd*, and *inconsistent* with our selves, must we then be, if we will not act *agreeably* to these our *Professions* and *Prayers*? How *hypocritical* will those *Professions*, how *abominable* those *Prayers*, be in the Sight of God, which we will not do our utmost, to make effectual?

Above all, *Lastly*, the Commands of God will surely move and determine us, to do our best, in this Case. I say, the Commands of God; for, tho' I do not remember that God has any where, in just so many expresse Words, commanded all Christians to do their utmost, towards the propagating of the Gospel: Yet I think it very plain, that, when he has so expressly commanded his Ministers, (u) to teach all Nations, and to (x) preach the Gospel to every Creature, even unto the End of the World. He has in effect, and by necessary Consequence, commanded all other Christians to be aiding and assisting to his Ministers, so far as they are able, and as it is proper and requisite for them, in this great Work. And besides there are particular Precepts, in Scripture, given to private Christians, enjoining them to do several Things, in Order to this very End of bringing over Unbelievers to the Christian Faith; as to avoid all Occasion of (y) giving Offence to them, to (z) have their Conversation honest among them, and so carefully to discharge all (a) relative Duties towards them, that by these Means, they might (b) win and gain them to Christ. And tho', in these Precepts, such Instances only of what they were to do, in Order to the Conversion of Unbelievers, are mentioned, as were, in those Times most likely to be in their Power: Yet there can be no Doubt, but that the general Reason of

(u) Mat 28. 19, 20. (x) Mark 16. 15. (y) 1 Cor. 10. 32.
(z) 1 Pet. 2. 12. (a) 1 Tim. 6. 1. (b) 1 Pet. 3. 1.

these Precepts did extend to all other Ways, in which the Christians of those Times, or any in after-Ages, should have it in their Power, to become serviceable to this great End.

Thirdly, We are oblig'd to this, by all the strictest Bonds of *Love*, and *Charity* to Mankind. As *Men*, much more as *Christians*, we are oblig'd to do all the good, that we can, and that is proper for us, to every Man; and the greater the good is, which it is in our Power to do, the greater are our Obligations to the doing of it. And consequently, the very greatest good of all, we must be most strictly oblig'd to do. Now who can doubt, whether the greatest good, that we can possibly do to Unbelievers, is not to make Known the Gospel; that is, in other Words, the true and only Way of eternal Salvation, to them? And how *unchristianly* and *inhumanly* then must we act, how altogether inexcusable shall we be, if we refuse, or even neglect, to do any Thing, that is in our Power, towards making (c) the Gentiles fellow-Heirs, of the same Body, and Partakers of the Promises in Christ, by the Gospel.

Lastly, We are oblig'd to this, in regard to our own spiritual and everlasting Interest. And this is a Thing, which after all that has been said, naturally proves it self. For since, as has been shewn, our doing this, doth so highly tend to the Honour of God, our Blessed Saviour and his holy Religion; is so perfectly agreeable, to the great End and Design of our Lord's coming into the World, to his Example, our own Professions and Practices, and the Commands of God; And is moreover such a full Proof of our true Love and Charity to Mankind; it will necessarily follow, that it must be, to the highest Degree, acceptable and well-pleasing in God's Sight, and, consequently, sure to be greatly rewarded by him.

(c) Eph. 3. 6.

Besides, that there are several express Promises, in Scripture, of transcendent Degrees of Bliss and Glory to all such, as shall be happily instrumental in (d) *converting Sinners from the Errors of their Ways*, and (e) *turning many to Righteousness*.

Upon the whole then, since, which Way soever we turn our Thoughts, whether to God, our Blessed Saviour, our most holy Religion, our Brethren, or our selves, our Obligations to this Duty appears so abundantly plain and cogent, I shall forbear saying any Thing farther upon this Head, and hasten to that, which I hope, what has been already said upon this has made a fair Way for, *viz.*

Secondly, The proper Ways and Means, in which all Christians, in their respective Ranks and Stations, may be serviceable to this great End. And here it will be convenient for us to distinguish, between such Christians, as by reason of their Stations and Circumstances of Life, have particular and special Opportunities, of being serviceable in this Work, and such as have not.

Of the first Sort are,

First, All Ministers of the Gospel. I mention these *first*, because to them *chiefly* is the Care, of propagating the Christian Religion, committed, by our Saviour. And I mention them *all*, because to *every* Order of them, this Care doth, in some Proportion, more or less belong. The Bishops indeed, who succeed the Apostles, in the Government of the Church, have the greatest Share, in this Care. It is their proper Business, to be the first Movers in all Designs, for this End: To watch for, and lay hold of, all Opportunities, that may offer themselves, for this Purpose, and to advise among themselves, and with such others, of their Brethren of the Clergy, and of the Laity likewise, as they shall think best,

(d) James 5. 20. (e) Dan. 12. 3.

about the most likely Means of improving these Opportunities, to the utmost. To form Schemes, and draw up Rules, from Time to Time, for the Management of this whole Affair: And, when they have done so, humbly to lay them before, and earnestly recommend them to, their Civil Governors, for their Approbation, Confirmation, and Encouragement. More especially, to provide a competent Number of fit and able *Pastors* and *Curates* to minister in this great Work, to direct them how they ought to comport themselves in it, and to contrive Ways for their comfortable Subsistence under it. And lastly, both exemplarily to contribute themselves, and to procure Contributions, from all others that they have any Interest in, more especially the Great and the Rich, and to excite the Clergy, under their Care, to do the same likewise, towards the Charge of carrying on such an expensive Work, as this must needs be.

And the Subordinate Clergy may be, several Ways, very helpful to the Governors of the Church, in this great Work. Some of them, by attending on, and joining in, their Consultations and Deliberations about it: Others, by looking out, from among themselves, and recommending to their Superiors, proper Persons to Minister in it: Others, by composing useful Books of Instruction and Devotion, for the Forwarding of it: Others still, by freely offering themselves, to be employ'd in any, even the most difficult and dangerous Parts of it; and all, by carefully obeying the Directions of their Governors, in Relation to it, and zealously recommending it to the charitable Assistance of their respective Flocks, and all others that they have any Influence over, and promoting it, by their own Charity, to the utmost of their Ability.

Secondly, All Civil Governors, professing the Faith of Christ, more especially the Supreme Governors, in any Nation, have it very much in their Power, to help

help forward this great Work. By readily hearkening to and encouraging, such Proposals, as the Governors of the Church, shall offer to them, for this End: By establishing *Societies*, for the more regular carrying it on, and endowing them, from Time to Time, with ample Powers, of all Kinds, requisite for this Purpose, and by earnestly recommending it to all inferior Governors, more especially those, who live in the very Countreys, in which this great Work is to be attempted, to give all possible Assistance and Encouragement to it.

And great is the Assistance and the Encouragement, which such inferior Governors, especially those last mention'd, have in their Power to give to this Work, by communicating Intelligences, concerning the true State and Condition of the People among them, who are either to be converted to, or perfected in, the Christian Faith: By advising, what will be the most proper and likely Means of doing this, and by using all their Power and Interest, to facilitate and expedite the Execution of these Means, that so this great Work may go on Prosperously, and, in God's due Time, be fully accomplished.

Thirdly, All Persons of Quality, Wealth and Character, have very particular Opportunities of being serviceable to this great Work. Their very owning it, and appearing in it, will be a sure Way to make it both taken notice of and esteem'd in the World: But their appearing zealous and exemplary in it, can hardly fail of bringing all Mankind in, to its Assistance and Encouragement. It is a vast deal, which their Stations and Circumstances enable them to do, even of themselves, for the promoting of such a Work as this; and a vast deal more, which the Influence of their Examples would lead others to do likewise.

Fourthly, All Persons having any Trade or Commerce with those Nations, where the Christian Religion is design'd to be propagated, must have many
special

special Opportunities of helping on the Propagation of it. By procuring Informations, as to all such Particulars, as the Societies, which have the Management of this Affair, shall desire to be inform'd in ; by assisting them, in the transporting of their Missionaries, and distributing them into, and settling them in, the most proper Places for their Work ; by recommending these Missionaries, their pious Work, and the Measures which they are order'd to pursue, in the Prosecution of it, to the Assistance and Encouragement of all their Agents and Correspondents : And, in one word, by obliging all those, whom they have Influence over, in their respective Stations, to countenance, support, and carry on this great Work, to the utmost of their Power.

Lastly, All Christians dwelling among these Unbelievers, whose Conversion is to be attempted, may do a great deal towards the effecting of it. By readily falling in with those Measures, which are concerted and agreed upon, by these Societies, for this End ; and by making use of all their Interest and Acquaintance, in the Country, where they dwell, for the rendring them effectual. By sending their own unbelieving Servants to the Ministers of the Places, where they live, to be fully instructed in the Christian Faith : By taking great Care of their Christian Servants, that they may both believe and do, as becometh their Christian Profession ; and above all, by leading Holy and unblameable Lives themselves, before these Unbelievers, and in all their Dealings with them, treating them with so much Justice, Equity and Candor, that they may hereby be induc'd to believe, that God is among them of a Truth. and may, *by their good Works which they shall behold*, be perswaded to glorify God, by turning to his Son, in this their *Day of Visitation*. 1 Pet. 2. 12.

Secondly, As to all other Christians, whose particular Stations and Circumstances of Life, do not give them any special Opportunities of doing service to this great Work : Yet even they will meet with general Opportunities of promoting and encouraging it, to a pretty great Degree. Many of them, that have not these special Opportunities themselves, may have an Interest in others that have, and by exciting and soliciting them to make use of them, for the forwarding of this Work, as far as ever they can, may almost do as much good to it, as if they had these Opportunities in their own Hands. And all Christians have it in their Power, to be frequently speaking well of this good Work, and recommending it to one another : And zealously to embrace and

improve all accidental Opportunities, that may fall in their Way of being serviceable to it; and more especially, by their Alms, and Prayers, very much to promote it, and help towards securing the Success of it.

I say Alms and Prayers; because the Success of this Work, must very much depend upon both these. The vast Expensiveness of it will necessarily require the one: And both will be very useful, towards obtaining the Blessing of God upon it, without which it is impossible it should ever succeed. And surely this great Work can never want Alms and Prayers to help it forwards, whatever other helps it may want: Since one, or both of these, is in the Power of every Christian upon the Face of the Earth; and since, whatever other Helps Christians may give to this good Work, yet they can none of them be dispens'd with from giving the Assistance of their Alms, or Prayers, or both, to the very utmost of their Power.

And for the more effectual securing the Alms and Prayers of all good Christians, towards the carrying on of this great Work, give me leave humbly to propose a few Things to you by Way of Question: As, whether it would not be proper to recommend it to our Governors (especially since they have been already pleas'd to countenance and authorize this Work,) to set apart a Day once in the Year by publick Fasting and Prayer to implore God's Blessing upon it? And, to make this as easy to all Persons as may be, whether *Good-Friday*, which is already appointed to be publickly kept Holy, with fasting and Prayer, in Commemoration of the Son of God's dying for the Redemption of all Mankind, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, might not be a proper Day, for this purpose? Especially considering that our Church itself has led us to this Thought, by making one of its Collects for that Day, a Prayer for the Conversion of all *Jews, Turks, Infidels* and *Hereticks*: And whether one or two Collects more added, of the same kind, would not sufficiently accommodate the Service of that Day, to this use? And farther, whether if a publick Collection, were to be made, in all Churches, especially in the Churches of these two great Cities (*London and Westminster*) on that Day, for the promoting of this Work, it would not be both a very proper and very great Help and Encouragement to it?

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, put all Christians in mind of their proper Ways and Means, in which they may be serviceable to this great Work. I shall now shut up all, with a few Words of Exhortation, taken wholly from Considerations proper to us of this Nation, and our present Circumstances.

And first, Let us remember, that there was a Time, when our Fore-Fathers of this Nation were in the very Case of these poor Eph. 2. 12. *Gentiles*, whom I have been now pleading for, *without Christ, Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenant of Promise, having no Hope, and with-*

without God, without the Worship of the true God, in the World. Nay further, when they were Gentiles far off, at a mighty Distance from that Part of the World, where the Christian Religion was then planted, and yet, that, even then, God did graciously vouchsafe to visit them, and all us their Posterity in them, with his Salvation. And oh! How can we any way better shew our true Sense of, and abundant Thankfulness to God for, this his unspeakable Mercy and Goodness towards us, than by our Carefulness to make all others, within our Power, Partakers of them: And doing our utmost that all Mankind may join with us, and with one Mind and one Mouth, glorify Rom. 15. 6. God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, Let us remember that we are Protestants, and as such are bound both, to wipe off that foul Reproach, of wanting a Missionary Zeal for the Conversion of Infidels, which our Adversaries of the Church of Rome have been casting in our Teeth: And likewise to prevent Infidels from being made a Prey to the Church of Rome, that most unsound and corrupt part of the Christian Church, and which, so industriously compasseth Land and Sea to make Profelytes to it; by using our utmost Diligence to profelyte them to our own Church, the best reform'd and most pure Part of the Christian.

And sure I shall not need, in this Place, to insist upon our Obligations, of another Kind, to do all the good we can to these Gentiles in particular, for whom we are more immediately concern'd: I mean the Obligations arising from those great Advantages, which we receive, from our Trade and Commerce with these Gentiles. It will be enough barely to put you in mind, that we cannot make them a more rich amends, for all these Advantages, for all these their carnal Things, than by letting them reap our spiritual ones. And that this Consideration ought more especially to quicken the Zeal of such among us for the helping on of this Work, as do most immediately partake of these Advantages, arising from our Trade and Commerce with these Gentiles.

And it would be endless to do more, than just mention to you, the many other Considerations, that there are to provoke us to the utmost Zeal, in this great and good Work now before us.

As,

That the proper Measures have been all along hitherto taken for beginning, settling and carrying on this great Work, and that therefore it may be with great Ease continu'd by us.

That these Measures have been hitherto very successful, and that therefore we have great Reason to promise our selves Success, in the Prosecution of them for the future.

That, at this Time especially, we have the highest Encouragement to be zealous in this good Work, when we have a gracious QUEEN upon the Throne, who has given us Her Royal

Royal Word, that, *She shall be always ready to do Her Part, towards Promoting and Encouraging so good a Work.*

That the carrying on of this Work *Abroad* will be perfectly uniform and all of a Piece, with those other good Works, which we have of late happily been carrying on here at *Home*: With Her Majesties *Bounty to the poor Clergy*, with our Endeavours for *Reformation of Manners*, and with our erecting and maintaining of *Charity-Schools*, for the Religious Education of poor Children.

Lastly, That this will be a very proper Way of returning our Thanks to God, for those many glorious *Successes and Victories*, with which he has of late been pleas'd to Bless us; and a most sure Way to engage him, to continue to us like glorious *Successes and Victories* for the future; and more especially to continue to us that *Trade*, with these *Gentiles*, which we shall be so careful to improve to His and his Son's Glory.

And oh that any, or all of these Considerations, may have that good Effect upon us, as to provoke us to Zeal in this good Work.

That as *Men*, as *Christians*, as *Protestants*, as *Englishmen*, we would lay hold of this blessed Opportunity now before us, of doing the greatest Good to those of our own Kind; of doing the highest Honour to God, our Blessed Saviour, and our Holy Religion; and of procuring the most desirable and lasting Blessings, upon our Church, our Queen, our Government, our Nation, our selves, and our Posterity.

I shall conclude all, with that excellent Collect of our Holy Church, which I before mentioned to you, appointed to be us'd on Good-Friday.

O MERCIFUL God, who hast made all Men, and hatest Nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have Mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks, and take from them all Ignorance, Hardness of Heart and Contempt of thy Word, and so fetch them Home, Blessed Lord, to thy Flock, that they may be sav'd among the Remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God World without End. Amen. 12 MR 58

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